

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

for this holy Easter," he wrote to Guido dal Palagio, shortly before Catherine's arrival in Florence, "and I have heard that thou art compelled to take certain offices of the Commune, for which matter I believe that questions often arise in thy heart, because of the war which you have with the Holy Father. But thou hast no need to doubt, as long as thou directest thy intentions first to the honour of God, and then to the good state of thy city; it is lawful for thee to aid her and defend her and counsel her, so that she may never fall into the hands of her enemies. If thou payest the loan, let not thy intention be to act against the Pope, but to defend thy country, and with this holy intention thou canst pass through all the offices of the Commune without mortal sin. Excommunications are made for those who sin mortally, and therefore hold for certain that no innocent man can be excommunicated ; and if, nevertheless, thou wert excommunicated, it would not be valid in the sight of God, who only confirms the sentence of pastors who bind and loose justly, with lawful cause. Only, thou must beware of giving advice or voting that the Pope, or any other cleric or religious, should be taken or slain. I should have said much to thee on this matter, did I not fear lest my letter should come into the hands of those who care little for the good state of that city."¹ But he was equally emphatic by word and letter against the Fraticelli, and prepared to defend the whole hierarchy of the Church against them. "What matters it to thee," he wrote to a Florentine artisan who had joined them, " whether Christ was poor or rich, as long as thou believest that He is thy Saviour, thy Redeemer, thy Food, the price of thy Redemption, and thy Reward ? I certainly believe that Christ was poor, and I would go through the fire for this, saving always all that our holy mother, the Catholic and Apostolic Church, holds."² Like Birgitta before him, the monk had profoundly mistrusted the papal designs for a Crusade. " If thou hast Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar," he wrote to a young nun named

¹ Letter in Tocco, / *Fraticelli*, p. 348.

² Wesselofsky, *UParaduo degħ Alberfi*, I. doc.